

# Denver Public Schools

*Denver Public Schools (DPS) proposes a two-fold districtwide expansion of its Professional Compensation System for Teachers (ProComp), a teacher compensation system with broad staff and community support that directly links teacher compensation to student achievement and has proven effective in increasing student achievement in a 4-year pilot program. First, DPS will develop, implement, and evaluate a performance-based compensation system for principals (with New Leaders for New Schools – NLNS). Second, DPS will strengthen its professional development, information, technology, and student assessment systems to ensure consistent and rigorous implementation.*

## Needs Assessment Results and General Information

DPS is a high-need urban school district serving over 73,000 students. Of these, 65 percent qualify for free and reduced price lunch, 20 percent are English-Language Learners, and 80 percent are minorities. Of the district's 150 schools, 132 are designated "high-need" and DPS has the 10th lowest graduation rate among the nation's largest school districts at 46.8 percent. Recent state assessment scores are low; as a district, only 43 percent of students are proficient in reading, only 30 percent are proficient in writing, and only 36 percent are proficient in math. The gap between DPS and the state average only worsens as children get older. DPS currently employs 208 principals and assistant principals and 4,250 teachers (83% high-quality). Attrition is a problem, as DPS fills approximately 20-30 administration and 680 teaching positions each year.

## Background

The DPS Board of Education and the teachers' union approved Teacher ProComp in March 2004; Denver voters approved the initiative in November 2005, and DPS then began implementation on a voluntary basis.

All teachers hired after January 2006 are required to participate, with full implementation of the program taking place in the 2006-2007 school year. The district has expanded its pay for performance program to include the development of principal components; DPS issued its first incentive payment for principals in September 2007. The new system aligns with Teacher ProComp and bases pay increases on accomplishments in four areas: demonstrated student learning, demonstrated classroom/school performance, the acquisition and demonstration of new knowledge and skills, and commitment to working in high-need schools and hard-to-staff assignments. With the TIF Grant, DPS will continue to support, expand, and refine both the Teacher ProComp and the differentiated principal compensation system.

## Incentives

Under ProComp, teacher salaries will increase as much as 40 percent during a 25-year career on the condition that a teacher's work contributes to academic gains. Teachers can earn salary increases for increasing their knowledge and skills, positive professional evaluations, market incentives, and student growth. Incentives are based on a percentage of salary index with the exception

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DURATION	5 years
PARTNERS	New Leaders for New Schools (NLNS)

of tuition reimbursement. Though ProComp will be instituted districtwide, only the schools that serve at least 30 percent of students who qualify for free and reduced-price lunch (132/150 schools) will benefit from grant funding. Through the program expansion, all district principals and assistant principals participating will have the opportunity to earn differentiated compensation in the form of annual, pensionable bonuses resulting from accomplishments in the areas listed above. The revision of the principal compensation program may also include additional features, such as documentation of effective practices that contribute to improved student and school performance.

## Evaluation

Evaluation measures include state and district student assessments, teacher and principal appraisals and surveys, public reporting, increased high-quality professional development, retention, and ongoing evaluation of the entire system. Overall project evaluation includes both quantitative and qualitative measures, including student achievement analysis; recruitment, development, and retention analysis; compensation program development, implementation, and refinement, as well as continuous feedback and improvement; and participation in a rigorous national evaluation.

## Resources

DPS will use grant and matching funds to support project activities. At the end of the grant, DPS will assume full district funding for ProComp, including the principal compensation program.

## Data Systems

The district will continue to develop and implement web based systems to support assessment and performance metrics, as well as systems to support and track ProComp and performance-based principal compensation.

## Year 1 Activities

Denver Public Schools has continued to evaluate and refine its nationally recognized and path-clearing teacher pay for performance program, ProComp, which is in its second full year of implementation. During the first year of TIF funding, participation in ProComp has grown from 37 percent to nearly 50 percent, with an exception of another 15 percent joining this year. In addition, during the first year of TIF grant funding, DPS has developed and implemented a pay for performance program to reward district Principals and Assistant Principals. Principal ProComp is aligned with Teacher ProComp, recognizing school administration for demonstrating student learning, acquiring and demonstrating new knowledge and skills, committing to work in hard to serve schools, and committing to turn around historically underperforming schools.

## Outlook for Year 2

As DPS enters its second full year of operating ProComp, the district recognizes that it is time to examine its experience and the data from the program evaluation to inform a revision of the system, in essence an upgrade to “ProComp 2.0,” in order to continue to improve rigor and drive better student results. The district will work during this year to focus its efforts on refining the Teacher ProComp elements and expanding its organizational capacity to support and align the Teacher and Principal ProComp systems and processes. As the Principal ProComp structure has yet to be finalized, the district will work this year to evaluate the initial system’s elements, partner with New Leaders New Schools to document best practices in distinguished schools, determine the program’s feasibility over the life of the grant, and present a design to the Executive Steering Committee for approval. This is an exciting time for Denver Public Schools, as it works to refine its nationally recognized Teacher pay for performance program and develop its associated Principal program in order to recognize behavior that ultimately drives improve student achievement.